

Public record solicitations

Wisconsin's Public Record Solicitation Law, Wis. Stat. s. 100.313, protects consumers from solicitations for public records by requiring disclosures, and limiting the amount of any fee being charged. The law makes it easier for Wisconsin consumers to identify these "official" or "governmental" looking mailings as sales solicitations, not official documents.

What is a public record?

A public record is any material which is created or kept by a local unit of government or a state agency.

What does the law do?

The law requires any business that tries to sell a public record must disclose in at least 24-point type font all of the following:

- The mailer is not from the government.
- No action is legally required by the consumer.
- The cost of getting a copy of the record from the government.
- Information to contact the local unit of government or state agency that keeps the record.

- The name and physical address of the seller.

The law prohibits making the solicitation appear to be from the government, including using a deadline, or language that implies it. The law also prohibits charging a fee more than 4 times the cost of the record. If the record is a deed, the business must provide a copy of the mailer to the register of deeds office at least 15 days before sending them.

Common scams

Consumers report that a common public record scam is when a business tries to sell you a copy of your property deed. A mailer comes with an official-looking name. Even the return address appears to be part of the government. The mailer looks like a bill with a fee over \$80. Additionally, the mailer has a deadline after which there will be a late fee. The truth is that most people get their deed when they buy their house. Even if they lost their deed, consumers can get a copy directly from the register of deeds office for a few dollars.

Another scam targets businesses by selling posters that are required to be displayed. The mailer implies that the business must buy them, or else they will

be fined. The mailers sell the posters for over \$100. However, the government often provides free posters.

For more information

For more information or to file a complaint, visit our website or contact the Bureau of Consumer Protection.

Bureau of Consumer Protection
2811 Agriculture Drive
PO Box 8911
Madison WI 53708-8911

E-MAIL:
DATCPHotline@wi.gov

WEBSITE:
datcp.wi.gov

(800) 422-7128

FAX: (608) 224-4677

TTY: (608) 224-5058

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